

The Constitution

Why is it specious to oppose, unless it is for reasons of principles, the adoption of that resolution and the start of our renewed constitution? Indeed, it would be a matter of concern if the resolution infringed upon the fundamentals of the sharing of powers between the central and provincial governments. It would be upsetting if, in fact, the resolution contained provisions adding to the powers of the central government and reducing those of the provinces or, inversely diminishing those of the federal government and adding to those of the provinces. However, Mr. Speaker, a close look at the resolution will reveal that it does not alter in any way those fundamental powers, the sharing of powers between central and provincial governments. What it does is this: it prepares—

Mr. Clark: I am listening!

Mr. Bussières: Yes, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) had better listen, because he does not seem to have understood. The resolution paves the way for patriating the constitution and that is important. As far as I know, this does not reduce in any way the power of the provinces or add anything to those of the central government. So the objective of the resolution is to patriate the constitution, to see to it that the most important document for Canadian political institutions, that is the constitution, become a truly Canadian instrument, to Canadianize the constitutional instrument governing the country. I think there is nothing outrageous in there, and the vast majority—

Mr. Clark: Bring back the constitutional document from London, England!

Mr. Bussières: Mr. Speaker, it has been a long time since the sophisms uttered by the Leader of the Opposition fail to impress me. He should realize that not only do they not impress Canadians but they make him look ridiculous.

We shall therefore begin by patriating the constitution. This makes the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) smile because he has never taken his role as a Canadian member of Parliament seriously. Does he really want Canadians to have a constitution? If so, let him support the resolution introduced by the government with the same energy he used to fight the Parti Québécois referendum. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, with this resolution, we shall be able to include a charter of rights in the Canadian constitution. Will the entrenchment of this charter of rights give more powers to the central government and take some away from the provinces?

The first aspect of the charter of rights concerns basic freedoms. We want to enshrine the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, the freedom of the press and the freedom of information in the constitution. The hon. member is showing that he is not very knowledgeable in this matter since the Canadian constitution does not provide for these freedoms. If we want to entrench these basic freedoms within the constitution, I do not see how this can add to the powers of the central

government and what entrenchment of the freedom of religion, of thought, of the press and of information takes away from the provincial governments, since we also want to include in this charter of rights basic democratic rights, the right to vote and the right of eligibility to the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, what does the fact of entrenching these rights within the constitution add to the powers of the central government? Does the entrenchment of the right to vote, the right of eligibility, the right to hold elections within a certain time take anything away from the powers of the provinces? I do not believe that by enshrining these rights of the individuals, these basic liberties, these democratic rights, we are taking anything away from the provinces or adding anything to the powers of the central government.

Still within the context of this charter of rights, there is the freedom to move and to settle down anywhere in Canada for all Canadian citizens. Once again, this individual right of a Canadian citizen adds nothing to the powers of the central government and takes nothing away from the powers of the provincial governments. The same is true of the legal guarantees of citizens, and non-discrimination. What is also extremely interesting is that the equal status of the French and English languages everywhere in Canada will be enshrined in the constitution.

Mr. La Salle: Where numbers warrant!

Mr. Bussières: And I hear, Mr. Speaker, like a heart-felt cry coming from the hon. member for Joliette, the bitter comment of the Quebec premier, "where numbers warrant." There is nothing disgraceful, Mr. Speaker, in the fact that equality of rights is guaranteed, adding "where numbers warrant"—

Mr. La Salle: Repeat that.

Mr. Bussières: —for some school services and so on. It is not disgraceful. It comes to adding, Mr. Speaker, and to indicating for the first time in Canadian history, the equality of rights of French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. And I am proud to see that our government provides all hon. members with the opportunity to give their views on this fundamental equality of French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, in a third step, we shall establish the principle of sharing, of equalization. What makes our country interesting is its wealth, reflected as it is in its diversity first, namely the make-up of the population itself. Diversity in respect of geography, which shows that throughout history there has been a displacement of wealth from one area to another, that some regions at some point in our history went through periods of wealth, and it is the foundation of our federalism that when these regions went through a period of wealth they shared it with other regions. And we realize, we get the obvious feeling these years, especially since the energy crisis, that that wealth